

STORY OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

BY FREDERIC J. HASKIN.

"I have the greatest admiration for your wonderful republic, and the highest esteem for the American people. I am proud of the great body of Catholics there, and will always counsel them to be thankful for the religious freedom which they have. I am also thankful to non-Catholics for the courtesy which they have shown to the Holy See. Say that I send my love and blessing to all Americans, irrespective of creed, and that I earnestly pray for a continuance of the harmony and prosperity which they now enjoy."—Pope Pius X's message to Americans.

Rome.—The story of the Roman Catholic church is a colossal subject. Once when I asked a priest to tell me something about it, the old man plucked a bit of foliage from an overhanging tree, and said: "My son, the record of the church runs through the history of the world like the veins that intersect this leaf." It was a good simile. Its origin is said to have been the words of Christ which are quoted in the eighteenth verse of the sixteenth chapter of Matthew: "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." This is the authority for considering the great apostle the first head of the church, and why each successive Pope is called the heir of the fisherman.

When we read what the first followers of the new sect had to endure, it seems that they could not have fared worse if the full fury of hell itself had been directed against them. Peter and thirty of his successors were destroyed for their faith. For 250 years not a single head of the church died a natural death, and countless thousands of their followers perished with them. It is not an extravagant figure of speech to say that Rome was baptized in the blood of the founders of Christianity. No barbarian ever devised more cruel methods of torture than were inflicted upon the martyrs by Tiberius and Nero. Then Constantine put the crucifix upon his banner and the emblem of the cross started on its journey around the world.

The Travels of the Cross.

The migrations of the emissaries of the new doctrine soon spread to all lands. It is told that while Gregory the Great was strolling in the market place in Rome one day he noticed some slaves with fair skins and pleasing appearance. When told that they were

vate character of some of the popes has been assailed, particularly that of Alexander VI., who was in power when the news of Columbus' discovery of America reached Rome.

There are so many churches in Rome that to visit them at the rate of one a day would require more than a year's time. These vary in size from the small chapel capable of accommodating only a few persons, to great St. Peter's which is so large that once when the Roman army went there to attend mass, the assembled rank and file fell so far short of filling the vast edifice that when the general arrived he looked about him hastily and concluded that the army was late. There are 12,000 persons in Rome who devote their whole time to ecclesiastical matters.

Sacred Relics in Rome.

The wealth that is invested in the churches is almost beyond estimate. They are decorated with the best works of the masters of sculpture and painting, and hardly one of them but has its sacred relic, more highly prized for its tradition than for its intrinsic value. Among the latter are included the steps from Jerusalem where Christ received his sentence from Pilate, a pillar against which the Savior used to lean while he was expounding the gospel in the temple at Jerusalem, several columns from Solomon's temple, two boards from the manger where Christ was born, a portion of the crown of thorns which he wore when crucified, and the swaddling clothes in which he was wrapped when his parents fled to Egypt. There are scholars who doubt the genuineness of these relics, but the multitude raises no question concerning their origin.

There are enough miraculous stories connected with the churches of Rome to fill several volumes. One of the most popular of these traditions is that



His Holiness, Pius X.

tioners led the old fisherman away to his death, he was so infirm that he could not carry his cross, and they crucified him where he fell beneath its weight. The old chronicles state that a few weeping Christians knelt there in the yellow sand that same night to pray, and men have been going there to worship ever since. First a little chapel marked the spot, then a larger structure covered it for 1,100 years, finally to give way to the present towering pile which was commenced 4,556 years ago. Great toil and great wealth were expended in rearing this mighty cathedral, and many of the earth's great dead are asleep in its friendly shelter. It is hallowed by such sacred associations that all who enter instantly feel the spirit of its majestic solemnity. The titanic proportions of everything, and the age-long story that is woven in the very wood of it, appeal to the senses in a way that can neither be resisted nor explained.

Vatican Has 11,000 Rooms.

Adjoining St. Peter's is the Vatican, the home of the popes and the largest palace in the world. That this extraordinary structure is a worthy neighbor of massive St. Peter's may be realized from the statement that it contains 11,000 rooms, has thirty magnificent halls, nine galleries, seven grand chapels, twenty courts, eight state staircases and 200 smaller ones, besides museums, libraries and archives. It is indeed a treasury of art. It is said that the contents of the Sistine chapel alone are worth a billion dollars. Who could estimate the price that Michael Angelo's Last Judgment or Raphael's Transfiguration would bring if they were offered for sale? While no combination of circumstances can be conceived that would lead to such a possibility, if the contents of the Vatican were ever offered for sale, there is not a fortune in the world large enough to pay the price they would command.

The tremendous extent of the Vatican, as well as the incomprehensible amount of treasure it contains, is shown in the story about a room which for some reason was walled up and became lost for centuries. After a long search entrance to it was gained through a window overlooking the roof of the Sistine chapel, and the rare decorations on its walls were again brought to light. It is known that some valuable frescoes are hidden by wooden

panels, waiting in another room once occupied by a papal cardinal, and it is not unlikely that other art treasures have been lost entirely in its labyrinthine extent.

Naturally the greatest interest centers around the room occupied by Pius X., who was formerly the patriarch of Venice. The pope was a peasant and he has never outgrown the humble habits of his lowly origin. As a child he had so little opportunity to gratify his yearning for knowledge that it was his habit to read a book while herding the cows. Recently, when told about some student who rides a bicycle to school, the pontiff sighed and said: "Ah, how the times have changed. When I was a boy I walked seven miles to school every day, and went barefooted in order not to wear out my shoes." One of his sisters keeps an inn in the little hamlet of Riese near Venice. She does her own work in the kitchen of her small hostelry, and the nieces of the pope are the waitresses therein.

Pope Longs for Old Haunts.

His holiness has three other sisters who have moved to Rome and taken up their abode near the Vatican so they can see him at intervals. Neither of these estimable ladies can read or write, which fact was brought out not long ago when an American lady requested them to write their name in her autograph album. At the time of his election the pope was so unwilling to assume the high office that it took the cardinals several hours to induce him to accept, and only then by convincing him that it was the will of God. It is said that he has never become reconciled to his confinement in the Vatican; that often when walking in the gardens he pauses long to look toward Venice. The old man is homesick for his familiar haunts. He cares little for the pomp with which he is surrounded, but yearns for the call of the gondoliers on the lagoons and the flutter of the pigeons in St. Mark's.

The pontiff rises at 6 a. m., devotes forty-five minutes to saying mass, after which he has breakfast, and then receives the secretary of state. From 10 to 1 he receives important personages in private audience. After luncheon he holds more private audiences, and from 3 to 5 receives pilgrims. During each week hundreds of people fill the big reception rooms at the Vatican.

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Front View of St. Peter's.

English he said, "they must be saved." So the monk Augustine and his forty companions were sent to convert the heathen. We hear of St. Remy in France and St. Boniface in Germany. Priests accompanied Columbus on his voyage and planted the cross on all the shores he visited; friars marched with the legions of Pizarro in South America, and with Cortez in Mexico. The travels of Father Marquette in America are more familiar still. Others followed in the wake of these intrepid pioneers, and at this time more than a million priests are administering the functions of the faith throughout the world.

Leo XIII. considered that he was the 253rd Pope, but since his death five names have been discarded from the list owing to the doubt of their being authentic, so that the present incumbent may be regarded as the 2,538th in the line descending from Peter. The popes have sprung from all walks in life. Sixtus V. herded sheep, Leo X. came from a family who were masters of Florence because of their riches, Adrian VI. was the son of a ship carpenter, Paul V. was a noble, Sixtus IV. was a walf, and the present Pope was a peasant. The reign of Pius IX. was the longest of any Pope, and that of Boniface VI. was the shortest. The former ruled for thirty-one years, and the latter but fifteen days.

Character of the Popes.

Volumes have been written about the personalities and eccentricities of the popes. Sixtus V. was so aggressive that he changed the face of Rome and the world in five years. Pius IX. was such a chronic speechmaker that he delivered 41 addresses in little more than four years—an average of two a week. Gregory XVI. was hard headed and opposed the construction of railways because he believed that mechanical industry would deprive many people of their means of livelihood. Macaulay says that Leo X. occupied himself with cameos, jewels, antiques and new saucers. Nicolas V. was fond of books and had a passion for building. Leo XIII. was cold, calculating and scholarly, and accomplished much by his masterful diplomacy. The pri-

concerning the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (the Greater St. Mary's). A wealthy Roman couple who were childless resolved to leave their money to the church, and prayed for some intimation as to how they should dispose of it. One night they dreamed that they should build a church on the spot where snow would be found the next morning. This happened in August, the hottest month of the year in Rome, so a fall of snow at this time could only happen by miracle. The next morning the ground on the Esquiline hill was covered with snow, and a plan of the future church was traced thereon.

The structure built on the site selected in such a strange way was completed in 350 A. D., and is still referred to as "Our Lady of the Snow." The date of the revolution was August 5, and the miraculous snowfall is annually commemorated on that day by showering white rose leaves from the dome during high mass.

St. Peter's, the Giant.

St. Peter's not only dwarfs all the other churches of Rome, but ranks as the giant edifice of the world. A famous author likened the surprise occasioned by the first view of its towering proportions to the feeling one would have if he met a man forty feet tall. Figures and comparisons can only partially portray the real magnitude of this colossal. It covers six acres. Its main aisle is an eighth of a mile long and its dome is a twelfth of a mile high. If St. Peter's were flooded the largest ship that sails the ocean could steam up the central aisle and its masts would scarcely reach above the top of the high altar. If its capacity were taxed to the utmost a congregation of 80,000 people might assemble within its walls, and 200,000 more could wait outside within the inclosure of the colonnades. In the lofty dome there is a mosaic of St. Luke with a pen in his hand. From the great height the pope seems of ordinary size, but in reality it is eight feet long.

On account of its age, and because it shelters the burial place of the apostle for whom it was named, St. Peter's has been called the parent church of Christendom. When Nero's execu-



Entrance to the Vatican.

A Corner of the Vatican.

THOSE MISTY BLUE EYES.

(J. Y. Foley in New York Times.)
She sold me a book, and I do not know why;
She sold me a book I had sworn not to buy;
I declared up and down I would not even look.
But I broke my resolve and she sold me her book.
She was such a sweet lass, so unwitting and shy,
With a wealth of dark hair and a fetching blue eye.
And I frowned upon her with a threatening look.
But she paid me no heed—only took out her book.
I had sworn not to look, but she told me a tale
Of a mother bedridden, so worn and so frail,
And of sisters and brothers, so young, to be fed,
And herself all alone, for dear father was dead.
Quite unfitted she was for the winning of bread—
Father had been so good to them, she said,
And the fortune they'd cause to believe had been his.
Well—a rascally partner; you know how it is.
So the bread must be won, and the rest were so young.
With the mother bedridden—some lesion of lung—
But of course, if I chose, she would never be less than a queen.
And her eyes shone with tears like two stars through a mist.
So she sold me the book, and the reason is plain.
She would sell me another if she came again.
But they tell me dear father is hearty and hale,
Content to be dead for the sake of a sale.
And the bedridden mother, so feeble and slight,
As she said, is bedridden, but only at night.
And there are younger children, all crying for bread,
But still she knows of them is what she has read.
So she sold me, and sold me her book—it is well.
But here, all alone, for my life I can't tell.
If it was her sad story I could not resist.
Or her eyes that shone wet like two stars through a mist.

ON THE FIELD OF GLORY.

Henry Sienkiewicz, the author of "Quo Vadis," has written another romance. It is called "On the Field of Glory."
It is a story of Poland in 1682, just before and during the second siege of Vienna by the Turks—a siege that was raised by the military skill of John Sobieski.
The names of the characters and of the places sound outlandish to us—Tzypredanovitch, Yaglovetski, Yelobukovinski, Kozentse, Stenysta, etc., and will repel English-speaking readers not accustomed to the riot of consonants in Polish. But with this difficulty overcome, the story goes on with a push and a roar to a plausible conclusion.
All of the chief male characters acquit themselves valorously "on the field of glory" and keep up the excitement to the end.
It is a notable book.—Catholic Columbian.

AN AMERICAN IDOL FACTORY.

A short time ago the New York Herald contained an illustrated article on an idol factory in Ninety-sixth street, where all the skill of designer, moulder and metal worker were united to copy and reduplicate the idols of India, China and Japan and to invent images of visage terrifying enough to satisfy the most fastidious African taste. The largest output of this factory is said to go to India, there to be devoutly worshipped. The average shipment to various countries is from 200 to 300 idols per month. The reason for this strange traffic is that this is an age of commercialism rather than of idealism. We have been accused of making a god out of the almighty dollar, and this seems to prove it without a doubt. An old thing will do so long as there is a profit in it, but the reckoning will come later when so-called civilized races will have to pay a heavy debt for the scandal given.—Catholic News.